

GARY LOCKE
Governor



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Gov. Gary Locke Highlights Popularity of Washington Wine in Vietnam

OLYMPIA – Sept. 27, 2004 – Gov. Gary Locke said today he has witnessed firsthand the popularity of Washington wine in Vietnam, and the market is expected to further expand. Locke just returned from a 10-day trade mission to China and Vietnam where he promoted Washington wine as well as other Washington products, services and companies.

Locke was accompanied on the mission by Valoria Loveland, director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture; Juli Wilkerson, director of the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development; and a 26-member delegation of business, agriculture and education leaders.

During the trade mission, Locke and Loveland participated in a Washington wine promotion at the Vine Wine Boutique in Hanoi, which featured wines from Chateau Ste. Michelle in Woodinville.

“We were literally surrounded by Washington wine – there was an entire wall devoted to it.” Locke said. “We were proud to see our state’s wine so prominently displayed in Vietnam. It’s further proof that our wine is among the best in the world.”

“Vietnam is a very promising trade market for Washington state, and we expect that to translate into even more sales of Washington wine,” he said.

In Vietnam, Washington wines are the second largest selling behind Chilean wines, and are ahead of other well-known wine producers such as California, Italy, France, South Africa, Australia and Argentina.

With 1,000 wines to choose from, the Vine Wine Boutique has the largest selection of wine in Vietnam, according to Don Berger, managing partner of the Vine Group head office in Hanoi.

“Last year I attended the Columbia River Wine Expo and was very impressed with the advances in wine quality since I was last in Washington about 15 years ago,” Berger said. “Washington wines are high quality and some of the best values in the world.”

Berger said he was particularly impressed with the Chateau Ste. Michelle wines, which won the winemaker of the year trophy at the International Wine Challenge Vietnam 2003 and the best red wine trophy out of 400 entries.

“Washington state is emerging as one of the world’s premier wine regions, producing wines that equal, and often times surpass, the quality of those in France and California,” said Keith Love, vice-president for communications and corporate affairs at Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, which owns Chateau Ste. Michelle, Columbia Crest and Domaine Ste. Michelle. “We are pleased to be a part of the governor’s important trade mission.”

Chateau Ste. Michelle is the oldest winery in Washington, dating back to 1934, just after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933. It also is one of the largest wineries in the state. Ste. Michelle Wine Estates sells wine in every state in the country as well as the United Kingdom, Japan and Vietnam.

Berger said more than a quarter of his customers at the Vine Wine Boutique Bar & Café are Vietnamese, about 20 percent are tourists and the rest are people from other countries living in Vietnam. Because Hanoi is the capital of Vietnam, he said they have a lot of ambassadors and embassy representatives from about 60 countries as customers. He said his customers’ reaction to Washington wines so far has been “most encouraging.”

“It’s taken a lot of promotion, training and education,” he said. “And we’re not done yet.”

Locke further promoted Washington wines on the trade mission by presenting bottles to Chinese and Vietnamese officials as gifts and talking about the industry and the awards it has won.

Loveland said, “It was a real thrill to see Washington wines being promoted so visibly. I had certainly never expected to walk into a shop in Vietnam and see so many bottles of our state’s wines. The governor and I are always telling people on our trade missions about our high quality, award-winning wines. Obviously the word has already reached Vietnam.”

Washington began exporting wine directly to Vietnam about one year ago. To date, the state has exported nearly \$36,000 worth of wine, according to U.S. Department of Commerce data.

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